

***Delaware River Basin Commission  
Comprehensive Water Resources Planning Workshop***

May 14-15, 2001

Meeting Summary

Prepared by

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For Watershed Advisory Council and  
Delaware River Basin Commission

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- A. List of meeting attendees
- B. Commission Resolution 99-23 Establishing a Watershed Advisory Council
- C. Draft agenda
- D. Handouts: *Principles of Collaboration and Consensus Building on Public Issues*.
- E. Presentation: *Development of a New Comprehensive Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin, May 2001* (prepared by Mike Personett)
- F. Breakout Group Discussion of Convening Report Issues
- G. DRBC Staff Draft: *Relationship of the Watershed Advisory Council to DRBC Advisory Committees*
- H. *Revised Watershed Advisory Council Draft Groundrules*
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## **I. Introduction/Overview of Comprehensive Water Resources Planning Process**

On May 14-15, 2001, the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) sponsored a two-day workshop with Watershed Advisory Council members and alternates, DRBC advisory committee representatives, commissioner liaisons and DRBC staff. The purpose of the workshop was to continue discussing what issues the plan ought to address and designing a planning process that involves the appropriate stakeholders within the institutional framework of organizations that participate in management of all resources in the Delaware River Basin.

During introductions of all meeting participants (listed in Attachment A) it became increasingly clear that the workshop participants all share a strong commitment to the Delaware River Basin.

After introductions, Carol Collier, DRBC Executive Director, provided background comments. Ms. Collier reminded participants that this planning process is essential because the current comprehensive plan does not set a direction for the future. The current plan is a constellation of many organizations' activities but is not a strategic document that provides guidance on overall goals for the basin as a whole and how the major players can work together and provide a high quality of life for future generations. Ms. Collier expressed appreciation for the involvement of so many of the key actors in this new effort. She emphasized that the results of human activities throughout the basin end up in the water, and thus, the resource becomes an important way to integrate people and their environment. What is needed is a plan that addresses environmental, social, and economic factors.

DRBC has convened the planning process with the hope that the participation of the basin states, USFS, NPS, USGS, Corps of Engineers and others will help to ensure the new plan can provide a framework within which all can act in concert. Ms. Collier reminded the participants that the rationale for forming the Council was to provide a forum for all of the interests and sectors needed to accomplish this task and to assure implementation of the resulting water resources plan. After the Council was created, a decision was made to conduct an issues assessment and then share what was learned through a "convening report" and discussion at this meeting.

Ms. Collier noted that funding is in place from the Commission and The William Penn Foundation, both for this workshop and for the project as a whole.

After Ms. Collier's introductory comments, Lance Miller, Acting Branch Head, Planning and Implementation, thanked participants for attending and walked through the notebook of materials provided to all participants.

The facilitators, A. Arnold and G. Bingham of RESOLVE, Inc., introduced the overall purpose of the meeting:

- Review and discussion of convening report and consensus that the report adequately reflects the issues that may be addressed in the Comprehensive Water Resources Plan (CP)
- Consensus on steps to be taken in the initial phase of activity
- Consensus on recommendations to the commissioners on grouping of issues for consideration by advisory committees
- Discussion and where possible consensus on groundrules and roles for the Council, advisory committees and ad-hoc committees
- Review of tools that can be used for consensus building.

There were no questions and the participants agreed to the draft agenda. [See Attachment C].

## **II. Consensus Building Tools and Principles**

Ms. Bingham of RESOLVE provided an opportunity for participants to participate in an exercise, “*Win As Much As You Can.*” The role play is a prisoner’s dilemma exercise where participants are encouraged to think strategically about how to maximize their own gains and the gains of other participants in the exercise. After the exercise, all participants received a handout summarizing *Principles of Collaboration and Consensus Building on Public Issues*. [See Attachment D].

## **III. Overview of Convening Report**

*Development of a New Comprehensive Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin, May 2001*, Mike Personett, M.S. Personett & Associates. [See Attachment E].

Mr. Personett reported that the convening report summarizes over 150 hours of interviews with nearly 100 parties. The objective of the interviews was to identify key issues and stakeholder perspectives on each of them. Interviewees included the 10 representatives (alternates and second alternates) of the state and federal members of the DRBC, 13 DRBC staff members, 30 members of the Watershed Advisory Council, and 22 other stakeholders.

Although the report is organized into key areas, Mr. Personett suggested that there are numerous ways it could have been organized. The report provides the reader with an overview of the various interested parties in the basin as well as their interests and concerns. Not all parties share all the same issues. Mr. Personett also suggested that there is a geographical dimension to the interests and perspectives of parties in the Basin. For example, parties who live in the upper basin have their own interests and are not necessarily aware of the interests and concerns of those who live downstream, and vice versa. This underscores the importance of discussion and dialogue among all parties about all the issues.

After providing this context, Mr. Personett walked through the key issues about which agreement and differences of opinion were apparent: What should a new comprehensive plan be? What ought to be the scope of the plan?

Mr. Personett summarized that there is agreement that the plan ought to be forward looking, include goals, strategies and performance indicators, and provide an overall framework for water resource management, as well as address institutional roles and responsibilities. However, there are differences of opinion about the scope of the plan. Some parties prefer the plan to focus on a set of core issues, while others want the plan to address the full range of issues in a “holistic” and integrated fashion. Mr. Personett suggested that the way to bridge these approaches is to do what Ms. Collier suggested in her introductory comments. The plan can be the place where the holistic issues are discussed. The roles and responsibilities of the DRBC and other agencies in implementing the plan can then be defined in accordance with their respective missions.

In the report the concerns of all parties were organized programmatically by issue:

- A. Water quantity
- B. Water quality
- C. Flood protection
- D. Waterway corridor management
- E. Public awareness

During discussion of the convening report some Council members expressed concern about the “silo-ing” of issues into traditional programmatic compartments. These members said that they would like to see the plan – and the thinking that leads to the plan – break out of these traditional “boxes” and reflect a more integrated, holistic approach to the watershed. One proposed alternative was to break issues up by use. Another was to organize the issues on a geographic basis. This raised the question of how tributaries should be factored in.

Workshop participants returned to the scope and approach of the plan later in the afternoon. This early discussion on Day One provided the seed for transitioning on Day Two from an issues-based approach to a goal-oriented approach to the planning process (see Section VIII herein).

Mr. Personett noted that several ways to organize the issues had been discussed. The categories used in the convening report ultimately were selected because they were the most straightforward and resulted in the least repetition of issues. Mr. Personett continued with his report on the issues in accordance with the attached slides (Appendix E) and the convening report itself.

#### **IV. Additional Issues Raised By Workshop Participants**

Workshop participants then met in four subgroups, with representatives of as many sectors as possible in each subgroup. Each subgroup was asked to focus on a different set of programmatic issue areas so that at the end of the breakout group session all issues would have been addressed by at least one of the subgroups. The tasks were to clarify key questions listed in the convening report, identify any issues not included in the report that should be included, and provide additional comments. After an intensive two-hour session, each of the four breakout groups reported highlights to the plenary. A full set of flip chart notes, with suggestions for additional or modified issues, can be found at Attachment F. Mr. Personett agreed to add these issues to the report in a final draft.

#### **V. Structuring the CP Process Within the DRBC Framework**

Jeff Featherstone of the DRBC led the discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the Commission, Watershed Advisory Council, and advisory committees, using the attached document as a guide. [See Attachment G]. Dr. Featherstone reviewed the basic structure of the Commission. The Commission has five members - the four Governors representing Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania and one federal member. The Commission meets approximately eight times a year, because it has regulatory powers and must act on permit applications. The Commission strives for a consensus, but uses majority vote except for issues associated with the annual budget, drought declarations, or any modifications to a Supreme Court Decree. The primary working bodies are the now nine advisory committees. The DRBC staff numbers about 45 people.

The typical decision-making process follows these steps:

- Ideas are floated
- White papers are developed
- Public meetings on white papers are held
- When an idea seems to be favored, then
- Formal public hearings are noticed and held, and if appropriate,
- The commission takes action

Dr. Featherstone then turned to the roles and responsibilities handout.

After his presentation, some members of advisory committees (ACs) expressed concern that their agendas already were very full and the ACs might be unable to fulfill the role recommended in the draft in the time frame envisioned in the draft. DRBC staff agreed that more thinking and coordination with all ACs would be necessary. Staff noted that if the proposed model were used, technical support would be provided by DRBC staff and consultants to assist the ACs. Others agreed that the ACs are an essential component of the planning process and that

some of them will need their tasks to be defined very clearly, with concise issues and questions to respond to. Some also may need facilitators to assist them in planning and running their meetings.

Dr. Featherstone concluded this discussion by stating that more thinking needed to go into the document on the role of advisory committees in light of the above comments and the interest in making the plan goal-driven, rather than issues-driven. DRBC staff will rewrite the roles and responsibilities paper and bring it back to the Council for review at a future meeting.

A participant asked what the thinking was on implementation of the plan, the relationship between the plan and the DRBC Water Resources Program, and the respective roles of different entities in the basin. Staff reiterated that the DRBC is convenor of the process and will adopt the plan, which nevertheless may include recommendations for management actions to be implemented by other agencies. The affected agencies will be part of developing such recommendations. One participant cautioned that some recommendations may end up being binding because of the requirement that projects approved by the DRBC be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Before adjourning on the first evening, DRBC staff and the facilitation team discussed the agenda for Day Two with participants. A small group of workshop participants volunteered to work together with staff and facilitators that evening to develop a revised agenda for the participants' consideration the next morning.

## **Day Two**

### **VI. Review of Accomplishments and Scope of Plan and Overview of Agenda for the Day**

#### Accomplishments

Ms. Bingham of RESOLVE opened the day by reviewing the workshop participants' accomplishments on Day One:

- Became better acquainted and formed the basis for a strong working relationship
- Discussed in depth their own ideas and aspirations for the planning process
- Added issues to the convening report
- Discussed overarching issues and what kind of comprehensive plan is desired
- Reinforced for one another the theme of needing to integrate traditional programmatic areas and offered suggestions for how to do this.

#### Scope of Comprehensive Plan

Ms. Collier, in response to a few questions, then summarized her current thinking about the scope of the plan and a goals-driven planning approach.

Ms. Collier stated that the DRBC was serving as a catalyst by convening this group and taking a coordinated approach to planning. She reiterated that the Comprehensive Plan would not be limited to DRBC actions, but would include recommendations that might be fulfilled by other organizations. The Comprehensive Plan will provide a framework rather than dictate actions. Those with responsibility for implementation, including the federal government, states, regional and local organizations have been invited to participate in the process so that the framework is consistent with how they do business and offers a coordinating function between and among all these organizations. Ms. Collier stated that the DRBC is attempting to create a forum where all the stakeholders can think about the resources in the Delaware River Watershed from a broader perspective. She acknowledged this is a big task and said she is enthusiastic about the ability of this group to tackle it. The workshop participants indicated their support for this approach.

Some concern was expressed about respecting the role of local government in land use planning decisions. Local governments have unique institutional characteristics in the various basin states. The concept of an overall framework is attractive, but how local government will fit into the plan will depend in part on whether these local governments are brought into the planning process. One member commented that if local governments see themselves as beneficiaries of the framework, it will work, but if they see the plan as dictating their decisions, it won't work. Ms. Collier outlined a performance-based approach that would involve providing performance goals and measures without intruding in local land use decisions.

Ms. Bingham outlined the proposed agenda for the day, to which the participants agreed:

- Review and discuss operating groundrules
- Review process for setting goals
- Discuss outline for CP process
- Over lunch discuss what is meant by “overarching issues” and report out
- Develop next steps schedule and agenda items for next meeting
- Evaluate Workshop
- Adjourn

## **VII. Review and Discussion of Groundrules**

Ms. Arnold of RESOLVE reviewed and discussed the proposed operating groundrules for the Council, which were handed out the evening before. Participants agreed to return to a set of revised draft groundrules at the next meeting. [See Attachment H for revised groundrules]. The Council members agreed that instead of organizing a formal Steering Committee at this stage, the members who had previously volunteered to assist DRBC staff with administrative matters would continue to do so. This group includes Howard



Neukrug, Dorothy Bowers, Jim Serio, and Jonathan Rinde. At Ms. Collier's invitation, two more volunteers, Barbara Hirst and Jan Bowers, joined the group.

### **VIII. Process for Establishing Comprehensive Plan Goals**

Participants requested that in general the DRBC staff play a lead role in bringing ideas and written drafts to the Council for review. In particular, the Council requested that DRBC staff develop a draft set of comprehensive plan goals for review and comment by the Council at the next meeting. The staff offered to include some thoughts about desired outcomes and/or performance indicators for each goal. It was agreed that the DRBC staff would use resource documents like the *Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for the Delaware Estuary*, the *Report of the Pennsylvania 21<sup>st</sup> Century Environment Commission* and *Flowing Toward the Future – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Visions and Directions* as a basis for a set of draft goals to be reviewed at the next Council meeting. [A list of resource documents was compiled by some of the small groups that met over lunch.] Once the Council reaches agreement in principle about goals (with the understanding that this will be an iterative process open to modification), the goals will be shared with the Commission. They also may be sent to the advisory committees for their thoughts about: 1) strategies needed to achieve each goal, and 2) data and other information needed to assess these issues. Some goals might be sent to more than one advisory committee (or ad hoc committee) to facilitate integration and identification of cross-cutting issues.

DRBC staff committed to issuing a set of draft goals for the Council's review two weeks before the next Council meeting.

### **IX. Proposed Table of Contents**

Workshop participants agreed to a general table of contents for the CP, provided below. They agreed that the document should be flexible, that it should be changed periodically, and that it could be printed in a looseleaf binder and/or uploaded onto the DRBC Web site. Participants also suggested that once the plan is complete an education or marketing component will be required in the implementation phase to ensure that the plan activities are successful and goals are achieved.

The draft table of contents follows:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction (how the plan was developed)
- Description of the Delaware River Basin, with graphics
- Goals
  - Desired outcomes, measurable objectives
- Strategies for how to get there
  - Current status, with focus on the information needed to achieve plan goals

- Analysis of data and information gaps
- What will be done?
  - Projected problems and what should be done to avert them
  - Action steps
- Who will do it?
  - May include a subchapter on DRBC activities
- When will it be done?
- What financial resources are available or needed to accomplish the task?
- How it will be determined that the activity has been accomplished?

## **X. Discussion of Overarching Issues**

Three breakout groups were formed to discuss: 1) how to define overarching issues generally, including some examples; 2) plan goals (which may be linked to overarching issues) for the upper basin; 3) plan goals for the middle reach and tributaries; and 4) plan goals for the estuary.

The breakout groups addressed the following three questions, with no specific consensus:

- What should a goal look like?
- What documents should staff draw from?
- What do we mean by overarching issues?

The materials developed during these breakouts are included in Appendix I.

## **XI. Next Steps, Agenda Items and Next Meeting Date: July 24, 2001**

A date and location for the next meeting were selected - July 24, 2001 in Camden, New Jersey - and the following agenda for that meeting was proposed:

- Review draft goals
- Review revised groundrules and roles and responsibilities
- Hear report on status of existing trends information/data

The following additional next steps were identified:

- Consider adding a few members to the Council (suggestions included representatives from: agricultural sector, USDA, conservation districts, commercial fishing sector, FEMA, transportation, planning, hydrogeology industry, and local or municipal government, potentially including a representative from a state association of municipalities or counties, or local representatives from an urban and a rural area).
- Have a small group develop a public involvement strategy (Tom Kerr, Meghan Wren, Craig Todd, Bruno Mercuri, Mathilda Harrison, Dorothy Bowers, Cathy Libertz, Tom Kerr, Greg Bean, Bill Gast, Barbara Hirst).

- Revise convening report to include issues generated during Day One of the workshop, and circulate to the Council for review. (Edits will be redlined so Council members can see changes easily.)

## **XII. Evaluation of the Workshop**

Each workshop participant commented aloud on the workshop. In general, participants thought that the meeting was very productive. Many participants hoped that there would be less discussion of process at future meetings and more substantive work accomplished, although several noted that some discussion about process was a normal part of getting started. Appreciation was expressed for the willingness and ability of the facilitators and staff to be flexible with the agenda. Several people also commented that discussions among such a large group that start from a “blank slate” can be confusing. Many encouraged staff to provide drafts as a starting point for group discussion. Several people noted that the Council’s discussion on whether to take an issues- or goals-driven approach, although frustrating at times, provided a good basis for future progress. Virtually all participants underscored the value of working with the people in the room and appreciated the opportunity to work on this project together.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM.